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The end of the Cold War and the start of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) has dramatically altered the operational environment faced by each Combatant Commander (CCDR) throughout the world, especially in the United States Pacific Command (PACOM). Nothing highlights this new reality more than the humanitarian relief effort following the tsunami in Southeast Asia in December, 2004. The U.S. Navy's role in Operation Unified Assistance, and the positive effect the operation had on the public's perception of the United States in Indonesia, has been one of the driving forces behind the re-thinking of the U.S. Navy's maritime strategy.

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

<u>**HA/DR: Recommendations for achieving the U.S. Navy's expanded core capabilities in the PACOM AOR**</u>

by

Bob Jones

LT, USN

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____

23 April, 2008

The end of the Cold War and the start of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) has dramatically altered the operational environment faced by each Combatant Commander (CCDR) throughout the world, especially in the United States Pacific Command (PACOM). Nothing highlights this new reality more than the humanitarian relief effort following the tsunami in Southeast Asia in December, 2004. The U.S. Navy's role in Operation Unified Assistance, and the positive effect the operation had on the public's perception of the United States in Indonesia, has been one of the driving forces behind the re-thinking of the U.S. Navy's maritime strategy.

The new maritime strategy, "A Cooperative Strategy for the 21st Century," was unveiled in the fall of 2007. The strategy was a departure from the past which placed a new emphasis on the U.S. Navy's role in the global environment by expanding its core capabilities to include humanitarian assistance (HA) and disaster relief (DR). The benefits of the new maritime strategy seem obvious – better relations with nations around the world to address common concerns, increased burden sharing to reduce the United States' responsibility throughout the world, and prevention of war at a regional or global level. The issue now is what can be done at the operational level by the CCDR – specifically PACOM – to ensure naval forces are able to accomplish the new expanded core capabilities.

The added pressure of additional core missions for the U.S. Navy will require a greater effort by PACOM to use the naval assets deployed in its Area of Responsibility (AOR) to the best possible effect without negatively impacting their combat readiness. No longer is it be enough to have ships on station to respond to conventional military threats. Now a shrinking pool of U.S. Navy ships must be able to defend the United States and her

allies while simultaneously being able to accomplish HA/DR. To do this properly will require good planning and creative thinking.

PACOM can facilitate the U.S. Navy's achievement of their HA/DR core capabilities by doing several small but significant things. First, PACOM can continue to explore ways to develop its command and control (C2) to make HA/DR response more timely and efficient. Second, PACOM should make the HA/DR role more prominent in the operational employment of naval forces in its AOR. Third, PACOM can continue to experiment with the Global Fleet Station concept to tailor it specifically for the HA/DR mission in the theater. Last, PACOM can expand joint, bi-lateral, and multi-lateral exercises to include HA/DR operations with a naval component.

> **America's sons and daughters serving in these distant regions embodied all the finest traditions and the highest values of the United States of America. They came quickly. They served quietly, and they departed without fanfare, seeking no recognition for themselves, deriving pleasure and reward only in the saving of lives and easing suffering.**
> **Brigadier General John Allen, USMC**
> **Statement before the U.S. Senate following**
> **Operation Unified Assistance**[1]

Humanitarian Assistance / Disaster Relief – Impact of Operation Unified Assistance

The tsunami that struck Southeast Asia in December 2004 was an unprecedented natural disaster that affected over 1.3 billion people. The United States' response, Operation Unified Assistance, was a tremendous success for the U.S. Navy. Within a week of the tsunami, ships were off the coast of Indonesia. In all, 26 ships, 58 helicopters, and 43 fixed wing aircraft participated in the relief effort and delivered over 10 million pounds of food and fresh water as well as medical care to over 2,500 patients. Additionally, the USNS *Mercy* remained in the area to provide additional medical assistance after the USS

Bonhomme Richard, USS *Essex* and USS *Abraham Lincoln* Strike Groups departed

following the immediate response.[2]

During the initial phases of the response, the *Abraham Lincoln* Carrier Strike Group

(CSG) clearly demonstrated the navy's flexibility in conducting humanitarian relief

operations. It quickly shifted its planning and watch structure to support the humanitarian

relief operations.[3] Despite no previous training and poor ship-to-shore communications, the

CSG established liaisons with the Indonesian government and aid organizations to transport

people and supplies to areas of devastation. A joint coordination cell that included all

branches of the U.S. military and liaison officers from all the ships on station was established

and worked daily with the Indonesian military. Helicopters from the CSG shuttled Non-

Government Organization (NGO) survey teams to the affected areas for observation and

assessment. The *Abraham Lincoln* provided computer, communication, and operational

support to the embarked the Rapid Health Assessment Team from the United States.[4]

The *Abraham Lincoln* CSG and *Bonhomme Richard* Expeditionary Strike Group

(ESG) were able to arrive in the area of the affected region quickly because they were

already operating in the close vicinity of Indonesia. But the speed at which initial

humanitarian relief operations started was also a result of close military relationships

developed in the years prior to the disaster.[5] Without the support of Thailand, Singapore, and

Malaysia, the relief effort would have been slower and significantly less effective.[6]

Improving ties with the Indian military were expanded upon as they assisted the United

States during the operation. A close working relationship between the United States and the

Indonesian (TNI) military was also developed quickly to facilitate the delivery of aid.

However, the relief efforts could have been more effective with the TNI if there had been more experience working with them before the disaster.[7]

Operation Unified Assistance also validated the operational concept of "sea basing."[8] Using the *Abraham Lincoln* CSG and the *Bonhomme Richard* ESG operating off the coast of Indonesia as the center base of operations, the U.S. Navy was able to "provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief without creating a large, intrusive, and vulnerable footprint ashore in the affected regions."[9] It also reduced the threat to relief workers and lessoned the need for force protection in the affected areas because all personnel returned to the ships at night. Then, once the Indonesia government determined the United States military's capabilities were no longer necessary, naval assets departed the area without issue.

> **You've (USNS *Comfort*) shown us the value of the synergy of interagency cooperation. You've demonstrated to us the value and the great return on investment on a mission like this. Also, you've trained numerous people for future missions for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and that is absolutely priceless."**
> **Admiral Jonathan Greenert, U.S. Navy**
> **Fleet Forces Command**
> **Comments following HA deployment by**
> **USNS *Comfort* in the Caribbean**[10]

Following the tsunami, PACOM began deploying ships specifically for HA missions. The first was conducted by USNS *Mercy* when she deployed for five months to Southeast Asia in 2006. Visiting Indonesia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and East Timor, *Mercy* provided medical services for over 61,000 patients, performed 1,000 surgeries, and administered 10,500 vaccinations.[11] The results from this deployment were felt immediately. Polls taken in Indonesia and Bangladesh following *Mercy*'s visits showed a dramatic increase in favorable public opinion of the United States by the peoples of the two nations. 63% of Indonesians (85% for those who knew of *Mercy*'s mission prior to being surveyed) and 95%

of Bangladeshis approved of *Mercy*'s visits.[12] PACOM followed up *Mercy*'s mission when USS *Peleliu* conducted a four month Pacific Partnership 2007 deployment from May to September of that year, in which the ship visited five countries and provided medical care and education to over 31,000 patients.[13] During the deployment *Peleliu* continued to demonstrate how inter-agency and international cooperation could be improved by embarking foreign and joint U.S. medical personnel and NGOs.[14]

In addition to the HA deployments, the "sea basing" concept has continued to be expanded on with the idea of a Global Fleet Station (GFS), which is in the early stages of development. Concerned primarily with Phase 0 shaping operations, the GFS is projected to be the primary tool for increasing maritime security using a sea base for operations by working with joint, inter-agency, multi-national, International Government Organizations (IGOs), and NGOs. Each GFS can be tailored to meet the Combatant Commander's needs in a regional area of interest to provide maintenance capabilities for ships, aircraft, and small boats, classrooms for instruction, intelligence support, and medical facilities. Additionally, a GFS could serve as a self-contained headquarters during a crisis.[15] The concept has been tested with good initial success in the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) by HSV *Swift* in the Caribbean and in the United States European Command (EUCOM) by USS *Mount Whitney* off the western coast of Africa.

To improve the United States ability to respond to natural disasters, PACOM has also begun conducting HA/DR exercises. The first, *Pacific Lifeline*, was conducted in January-February 2008. This exercise was conducted by the Air Force and Army to provide the opportunity for the United States (joint and inter-agency), foreign nations, IGOs, and NGOs to table-top humanitarian relief operations in the PACOM AOR.[16]

Ties with the Indian Navy in conducting HA have continued to grow following Operation Unified Assistance. *Malabar 07-2*, conducted by the USS *Kitty Hawk* CSG along with ships from the Royal Australian Navy, Japanese Defense Force, and the Republic of Singapore Navy included a humanitarian component.[17] The exercise also provided the Indian Navy the opportunity to use CENTRIX as a method of C2, which illustrates both the opportunities and challenges of inter-operability between the U.S. Navy and its coalition partners.

CENTRIX is an encrypted computer communication system that the Indian Navy does not have access to other than during the *Malabar* exercises. To provide the Indian Navy with this capacity requires U.S. Navy personnel to embark Indian ships to install, maintain, and monitor the use of the system. From my own personal experience during *Malabar 06*, access to the system is not 24/7 and amounted to communications with Indian ships on the system only being available for a few minutes every hour. This resulted in only periodic check-ins by the Indian Navy with no actual C2 being accomplished via the system. However, it can be expected that the use of CENTRIX will become more pronounced in C2 during future exercises as experience in setting up and using the system with the Indian Navy grows.

> **"[A] strong enemy with absolute superiority is certainly not without weakness…[O]ur military preparations need to be more directly aimed at finding tactics to exploit the weaknesses of a strong enemy."**
> **Liberation Army Daily (China), 1999**[18]

No matter how important HA/DR preparedness appears to be, complete support for the expansion of the U.S. Navy's core capabilities to include HA/DR will not be universally accepted. In the minds of many, the U.S. Navy exists to fight and win the nation's wars. Currently, the United States does not have a peer competitor, but in the future it may. In the

present it has to focus on countering the threat from emerging nations who are concentrating on sea denial. In the PACOM AOR that means preparing for conflict with China.

Arguments against expanding the U.S. Navy's core capabilities to include HA/DR are centered on the threat that exists from the emerging naval capabilities of China. The threat posed by China is at the forefront of concerns about a future regional conflict because China's leaders have not fully explained the objectives of their military modernization or been open in their military and security affairs. Because of this there is an increased possibility "for future misunderstanding and miscalculation."[19] This is a major concern due to the potential of hostilities breaking out between the United States and China over Taiwan.

The other concern is the Chinese military strategy, which is centered on the philosophy of an "active defense." This strategy places the emphasis on an active offense during any campaign "to take the initiative and to annihilate the enemy…"[20] To do this, China has been developing its asymmetric capabilities to threaten an opponent's force generation and aircraft carriers.[21] The Chinese Navy has been increasing its capabilities to counter a superior, high technology force. It has acquired cruise missiles and developed anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM) to attack ships at sea.[22] Additionally, China is working on building its own aircraft carrier, is improving its over-the-horizon (OTH) targeting capability, has increased its diesel-electric attack submarine inventory, has built up its surface forces' air defense capabilities and is producing anti-ship cruise missile (ASCM) armed patrol craft.[23] This asymmetric threat is most applicable to threatening the U.S. Navy during any conflict and provides the best argument against expanding the U.S. Navy's core capabilities to include HA/DR: it distracts the U.S. Navy from focusing on countering this asymmetrical threat from China.

Analytical Conclusions from the history of HA/DR operations and exercises

The most easily identified lesson that can be taken away from Operation Unified Assistance is that a prior working relationship with other nation's militaries greatly enhances the ability to respond during a crisis. The strong working relationship between the United States and Thailand facilitated the quick establishment of a logistics hub in Utapao, Thailand to support the tsunami relief effort. Likewise, the developing ties with the Indian military allowed the United States to integrate their forces without much difficulty. However, while problems with working with the TNI were worked out, the lack of familiarity with them prior to the disaster slowed the response and efficiency of the operation.

HA deployments are obviously well received by the nations of Southeast Asia, as the polls following *Mercy*'s deployment to Bangladesh and Indonesia indicated. Continuing to deploy ships solely for HA operations brings with it a greater acceptance of the United States role in the world and approval of its foreign policies. The promotion of these deployments as part of a strategic communications plan would bring even bigger dividends.

Current joint, bi-lateral, and multi-lateral exercises provide excellent opportunities to practice HA/DR capabilities while expanding ties between the nations of the world. It can also be expected that the nations of the region would be more open to participating in exercises if a HA/DR component is included. As an example, *Cobra Gold* had only involved the United States, Thailand, and Singapore up to 2003,[24] but in 2007 saw an increase in both active participants and observers.[25] It can be assumed that the inclusion of a HA/DR during the exercise was a major reason for this.

> **"As we have seen in our recent missions…the *USS Peleliu* Pacific Partnership in Southeast Asia, our effectiveness overseas is as dependent on our ability to comprehend and communicate as it is on firepower and technological superiority. Facility with languages, expertise in regional**

affairs, and broad awareness of foreign cultures is essential of effective interaction with our diverse international partners and emerging friends. These competencies are key to…humanitarian efforts, and shaping and stability operations… They are a prerequisite to achieving the influence called for in the Maritime Strategy.
>   **Vice Admiral John C. Harvey Jr., U.S. Navy**
>   **Deputy Chief of Naval Operations,**
>   **February 27, 2008**[26]

Continuing development of C2 will pay dividends in the accomplishment of HA/DR missions. At the operational level, closer relationships between the U.S. Navy and joint, inter-agency, IGOs, and NGOs would enhance its ability to respond more effectively and with less duplication of efforts. At the local level, exposure to the militaries, police forces, and governments in the local area of operations would make coordination easier and response timelier. By establishing networks and channels to operate more effectively with all the players in the HA/DR realm, the U.S. Navy's ability to meet this expanded core mission will only be enhanced.

The Global Fleet Station concept has great potential to meet the operational objectives of "sea basing." First, it meets a primary requirement of being a flexible response that PACOM could use to meet changing needs. Its mobility allows it to move where it is needed and could provide a robust local C2 capability. Second, since it is not constrained by a specific platform, numerous ship types could be employed depending on the requirements of the mission.

Obviously, a conflict with China could occur over Taiwan or some other regional issue in the future and the buildup of their naval capabilities would make them a formidable foe. However, to focus exclusively on the naval threat from China by PACOM would be a mistake. China is a concern, but only one of many in the AOR. Terrorism, maritime security and HA/DR also have to be dealt with. America's multi-purpose naval platforms are ideally

suited to carry out the HA/DR mission without negatively impacting overall combat readiness. Ships on station conducting HA/DR could easily be shifted to meet any conflict with China in the AOR. The best statement that can be used to support this is attributed to Rear Admiral Doug Crowder, Commander of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* CSG during Operation Unified Assistance, who when asked if the disaster relief effort was straining the military's ability to fight wars reportedly responded "this is not a distraction from our job, it is our job."[27]

Recommendations for achieving HA/DR core capabilities in the PACOM AOR

Improvements in C2 for HA/DR by PACOM would make operations more responsive and efficient. Unfortunately, there are no quick solutions to solve every problem, but there are at least two options that could be implemented to improve the situation at the operational level. One is to establish a standing Civil-Military Headquarters for HA/DR. Another option would be to create a Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) structure in Southeast Asia (SEA) similar to CJTF-Horn of Africa (HOA). CJTF-HOA would be a good model since its strategic priorities - to forge relationships, build national and regional security capacity, develop leaders and enable synergy and coordination, and synchronize the areas of defense, diplomacy, and development[28] - match up well for the HA/DR mission. In either case, both structures would provide a single point for coordination of HA/DR between the U.S., foreign nations, IGOs, and NGOs on a long-term basis, vice only when a crisis occurs. Additionally, either a Civil-Military Headquarters or CJTF would bring increased U.S. visibility to the area, enable increased contacts and coordination between the nations of the region, as well as IGOs and NGOs, and provide a staff on station with local knowledge and contacts to execute HA/DR operations.

At the operational and tactical levels, the expended use of CENTRIX would be of great utility. To be able to communicate more effectively with coalition partners on shore and at sea would allow much easier coordination of efforts. The spread of the use of the system to other nations in the PACOM AOR will take a great deal of time due to security concerns, but requiring deploying ships to possess the equipment and ability to transfer that capability to nations assisting the United States in HA/DR missions could be a short term solution for improving C2 while longer term fixes are pursued.

The HA/DR mission could be made more prominent in the PACOM AOR. This can be done in at least three ways. First, PACOM could increase or lengthen HA deployments. This would ensure greater coverage and asset availability for immediate response to any natural disasters in the AOR and would also increase U.S. visibility in the region. As demonstrated by *Mercy*, HA deployments are viewed very positively by the local populations of Southeast Asia. Second, PACOM should require that training and certification in HA/DR be mandatory for all assets deploying in the AOR. This would push cultural awareness training to the crews of those ships earlier and would allow forces deploying in the AOR to work through HA/DR problems and develop experience prior to the execution of any "real world" operations. Deploying staffs should also have the opportunity to meet representatives from the various IGOs and NGOs working in the areas they are deploying to allow them the opportunity to develop contacts and personal relationships that would be of great value during the planning and execution phase of any HA/DR operation. Third, PACOM should designate and publicize as part of a strategic communications program that each CSG and ESG transiting through the AOR is the HA/DR response group and also employ them more aggressively in the execution of HA operations. Currently, as a portion of Theater Security

Cooperation (TSC), only limited time is dedicated to HA by transiting strike groups. The

time and scope of these operations could easily be increased, to greater effect, with limited

impact on current operational schedules.

PACOM needs to experiment with the Global Fleet Station concept to determine how

to use different naval platforms to accomplish the HA/DR mission. The deployments of

Mercy and *Peleliu* are good starting points, but *Mercy* is in essence a single purpose ship for

medical support while *Peleliu* is a large deck amphib with extensive C2 capabilities and the

ability to carry large numbers of helicopters for logistical support. It is unrealistic to believe

that either platform, or a combination of them, would be available at all times during a single

calendar year. By experimenting with different ship types, or multiple ships, it will be

possible to determine how smaller and less capable platforms can be used to accomplish the

HA/DR mission. Cruisers and destroyers may not seem to be ideally suited for the mission,

but their speed would allow them to respond faster than both *Mercy* and *Peleliu*, their C2

structure is almost as robust as *Peleliu*, most have embarked helicopters that could be

invaluable assets to provide initial reconnaissance in disaster areas, and they could assist host

nations with maritime security and search and rescue operations at sea.

The expansion of joint, bi-lateral, and multi-lateral exercises to include a HA/DR

portion with naval assets would better prepare the U.S. Navy to execute HA/DR missions.

Almost any scenario where a natural disaster would occur in the PACOM AOR would be

ideally suited for naval assets due to the large populations along the coastlines in the nations

of the region. The inclusion of HA missions during *Cobra Gold 2007* and *Malabar 07-2* and

the initial *Pacific Lifeline* exercise are steps in the right direction to prepare for HA/DR.

Specifically, the *Pacific Lifeline* exercise allowed the joint capabilities of the U.S. Air Force

and Army to be brought together with numerous foreign nations, IGOs, and NGOs to practice a response to a disaster in the PACOM AOR. Unfortunately, this exercise apparently excluded the U.S. Navy from active participation. This needs to be corrected before the next exercise.

Emphasizing HA/DR: its impact on potential conflict with China

Improving C2 for HA/DR would also be of value during any conflict with China. Expanding cooperation and interaction with foreign nations in PACOM would also lend itself to coalition operations in combat, since any response to China would invariably be a coalition effort. The expanded use of CENTRIX by more navies in the AOR would also improve our inter-operability at the operational and tactical levels.

The promotion of the HA/DR mission will not have an impact on the U.S. Navy's ability to wage war. As part of a strategic communication plan, HA deployments are invaluable for building up goodwill and support for the United States, support that could be drawn upon to respond to threatening acts from China. Designating transiting CSGs and ESGs as HA/DR response groups does not remove any of their warfighting capabilities or take away PACOM's ability to use them if they are needed more urgently for more critical missions. It merely shows the U.S. Navy's commitment to implementing its global maritime strategy.

The GFS concept would not detract from responding to a threat from China. The first response would naturally come from a CSG or ESG due to the combined naval capabilities they possess. Their strength may even make the use of the GFS ship unnecessary. However, depending on the ship type on station, the GFS could still be re-directed for combat operations if it could be used in that role.

The inclusion of HA/DR operations during joint, bi-lateral, and multi-lateral exercises would actually improve the U.S. Navy's ability to counter the Chinese during war. Expanding existing exercises to include HA/DR would not detract the focus from the combat operations during those exercises since both missions have different requirements. But HA/DR does hold out the possibility of more nations participating in those exercises due to its non-threatening nature. Involvement of more countries would improve the U.S. Navy's inter-operability with coalition partners. HA/DR exercises could also develop a working relationship with the Chinese military because of a shared concern between the United States and China of a possible HA/DR operation being required on the Korean peninsula due to a collapse of the North Korean regime. In the event of a collapse, the impact to China would be far greater than to the United States. A relationship built up from a common HA/DR concern could end up easing tensions between the United States and China and bring a more open policy in military affairs from China's leaders.

Final Remarks

The expansion of the U.S. Navy's core capabilities to include HA/DR is sound strategy that will pay untold dividends for the United States in the future. While the threat from China in the PACOM AOR is real, it can not be the sole focus when determining the operational employment of naval assets in the theater. War with China is not a forgone conclusion. HA/DR operations are, since they are expected to occur with more frequency due to global warming. Additionally, there is a new expectation of a response from America following any natural disaster after its response to the tsunami in December, 2004.

The HA/DR mission in the PACOM AOR can be improved without sacrificing the U.S Navy's ability to conduct combat operations against China. By improving C2 for

HA/DR, the Navy will be also improving its inter-operability with the other navies of the world. Promoting the HA/DR role more prominently in the operational employment of naval forces in its PACOM AOR will increase the public support from the populations of the region for U.S. foreign policy. Using the Global Fleet Station concept will allow the HA mission to be continuous while not sacrificing naval assets from possible combat operations. The expansion of joint, bi-lateral, and multi-lateral exercises to include HA/DR operations with a naval component should result in an even greater number of nations who could be coalition allies in the future.

Defending the nation from attack and winning our nation's wars will always be a major role for the U.S. Navy, but it is also maintained for the promotion of peace. The expansion of the U.S. Navy's core capabilities to include HA/DR is another example of how this can be achieved. We will always need to focus on preparing for future wars, but in the present, HA/DR is our job.

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